



NORTH DAKOTA
DEPARTMENT *of* HEALTH

NEWS RELEASE

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State Health Department Cautions Residents About the Dangers of Lead-Based Paint

BISMARCK, N.D. – In conjunction with *Home Indoor Air Quality Month*, the North Dakota Department of Health is cautioning residents about the dangers of lead-based paint.

Governor John Hoeven has proclaimed October 2009 as Home Indoor Air Quality Month to encourage North Dakotans to learn more about indoor air quality issues.

Lead is a highly toxic metal that was used for many years in products found in and around homes, such as paint and wood stains. Lead can cause a range of health effects, from behavioral problems and learning disabilities, to seizures and death. Children age 6 and younger are at the most risk for health effects from lead. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that more than 300,000 U.S. children younger than 5 have blood lead levels greater than the maximum recommended level.

Although residential use of lead-based paint was banned in 1978, it is still the most common source of lead in the home. Lead-based paint is found in many places in and around older homes; for example, interior and exterior walls, ceilings, stairways, door and window trim, and baseboards.

According to the Department of Health, all lead-based paint surfaces should be inspected regularly to look for signs of wear or disintegration. Any lead-based painted surface that shows signs of deterioration can easily release lead into the environment. In particular, watch for hazardous conditions such as chipping, flaking and water damage. Any damaged lead-based paint should be repaired immediately. Paint chips containing lead are a hazard if eaten by children.

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Lead-based paint also contributes to another serious hazard – lead dust. Lead dust is inhaled or swallowed easily and can be scattered throughout the house, where it can get on toys, floors, play areas, soil and food.

“Any home remodeling project that disturbs lead-based paint in a home built before 1978 should be carried out properly to avoid exposing occupants to lead,” said State Health Officer Terry Dwelle, M.D. “Children and pregnant women should never be around renovation or remodeling projects that create lead dust.”

The North Dakota Department of Health recommends that homeowners test paint for the presence of lead before beginning a renovation project. If lead is present, special precautions should be taken to protect children in the home from the risks of lead poisoning. Renovation work should proceed only when those performing the work are well aware of the hazards and are knowledgeable about how to reduce or minimize the risk.

If lead-based paint is a risk in the home, there are several ways to reduce the hazard. Removal of the lead-based paint may be necessary and should be done only by a trained professional. Sometimes, painted surfaces can be sealed with good quality paint or covered with other material such as drywall or paneling. Good maintenance and housekeeping practices, especially wet cleaning to reduce lead dust, can help control the risk of lead dust and childhood lead poisoning.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has developed new regulations for managing the risks of lead during renovation projects. The regulations will go into effect in April 2010 and include certification of general contractors who conduct work on materials that contain lead-based paint, recommendations for minimizing the spread of lead dust, limiting the amount of lead dust produced, protecting the workers from lead hazards, and cleaning up during and after the work project.

To learn more about the new lead-based paint safe practices regulations for home renovation and remodeling, contact Justin Otto or Mark Dihle, North Dakota Department of Health, at 701.328.5188. Information also is available on the EPA website at www.epa.gov or the state health department website at www.ndhealth.gov.

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